

THE  
D U T Y  
OF  
SUBMISSION  
TO  
Divine Providence  
In all its Dispensations  
Described and Recommended from  
the Example and Argument of  
J O B.

By SAMUEL MASTERS. B.

James. 1. 12. 13. Take, my Brethren, the Prophets  
have spoken in the Name of the Lord in an earnest  
suffering Affection, and of Patience. Blessed are  
them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the  
of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: the  
Lord is very pitiful, and of tender Mercy.

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the Black-Swan in St. Dunstons Church-yard.



IMPRIMATUR,

July 23.  
1689.

Guil. Needham.



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TO THE  
Right Honourable the LADY  
LETITIA ISABELLA  
Countess Dowager of  
RADNOR.

MADAM,

**T**He late smarting  
Afflictions which  
I have felt in my  
Person and Family, have  
made me very quick of  
Sense in resenting Yours;  
and have engag'd my  
Mind on such Meditati-  
ons, as may render me  
A 2 capable

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## *The Epistle*

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*capable of speaking a  
Word in Season to You.*

*I dare not be so unjust  
to your Sorrows, as to  
dissemble or extenuate  
your Loss: All who  
knew the Lady Essex,  
found it necessary to ad-  
mire her for the Beauty  
of her Person, the Quick-  
ness of her Parts, and the  
most obliging Sweetness  
of her Conversation;  
but chiefly for her Reli-  
gious Accomplishments,  
her unaffected Vertues,  
and her frequent Exer-  
cises*

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## Dedictory.

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cises of Devotion, both  
in publick and private.  
But I need not tell your  
Ladyship how good she  
was, who took so much  
delight in making and  
seeing her such; and I  
dare not gratify my self  
any farther in displaying  
her excellent Character,  
lest I should thereby sol-  
licit those Tears, which  
your Religious Wisdom  
endeavours to suppress.  
I would rather observe  
to you those good things  
wherewith the Divine  
Wif-

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## *The Epistle*

---

Wisdom *bath* attempered your Affliction, *that* the Sweetness of the One, may allay the Bitterness of the Other.

The Person You bewail is indeed gone from You, but to her Heavenly Father; She died in the Youth of her Age, but not before She was capable of a Life of Glory; She left the World when it began to tempt her with a New Scene of Enjoyments; but She left its Vanities,  
and

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## *Dedictory.*

---

*and Troubles too, and  
but gain'd by the ex-  
change much purer and  
more lasting Joys.*

*You have lost One  
Blessing, but Others  
continue still, which de-  
serve your Esteem and  
Love, and which may  
support and console  
the Remainder of your  
Life. You have lost a  
Child, but Your Hea-  
venly Father is immor-  
tal and unchangeable,  
who will continue to  
dwell with you here by*

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## The Epistle

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his Holy Spirit, till he take you up to dwell with him Above; of which he hath given you a Pledg in advancing a part of you already thither.

Let not then the evil Things You have met with, so far ingross Your Thoughts and Affections as to rob God of the Honour, and Your self of the Comfort, of all those good Things he hath provided and prepared for You.

And

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## Dedicatory.

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*And to assist You herein, I humbly offer the ensuing Discourse, to perfect You in that Art, wherein You are already so well improv'd, of receiving dutifully whatever good or evil is dispensed to You by the Hand of Providence.*

*That You may continue long among us to recommend the Power and Beauty of Religion by Your Illustrious Example: And may at last exchange Your Earthly Ho-*

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*The Epistle, &c.*

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*Honour for a far brighter  
Glory in Heaven, is  
the Hearty Prayer of,*

*M A D A M,*

*Your most Humble and Faithful  
Servant and Chaplain,*

**SAMUEL MASTERS.**

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**JOB**

## JOB 2. 10.

---What? shall we receive good  
at the hand of God, and  
shall we not receive Evil?

**T**Hese Words relate to a  
Passage in the Histo-  
ry of *Job*, concerning  
which History it may be  
useful to premise a few  
Things, to recommend it  
to our *serious Attention*, and  
to predispose our Minds, by  
some proper *Anticipations*, to  
consider more *easily* and *pro-  
fitably* this Argument of the  
Text.

There have been some  
*Christians* of late, and some  
*Jews*

*Jews* of old, who thought this History of *Job* to be a Poetick Fiction, and not a real History, because so extraordinary in its Matter, and so artificial in its Composure; and because they observe that it was usual in those Times to teach and exemplify the Institutions of Morality and Religion by such Fictitious Parables. But when we consider how positively this History doth describe and assert the Person of *Job*, and the several Circumstances of his Condition; also that the Holy Ghost makes mention of *Job*, as a Person in great Favour with God, and joins him with *Noah* and *Daniel*, of whose Reality

Ezek. 14. 14.

ality there can be no doubt ;  
and that St. *James* recom- Jam. 5. 10, 11.  
mends *Job* for an imitable Pat-  
tern of *Patience*, which can-  
not but suppose the *Reality*  
and *Truth* of his *History* :  
These Considerations will  
be sufficient to induce us to  
concur with the more general  
*Testimony* both of *Jews* and  
*Christians*, that this *History*,  
however wonderful, is yet  
real, that there was indeed a  
Man so great and good as *Job*,  
that his *Trial* was no less, and  
his *Patience* as great as this  
Book describes and asserts.

And as this *History* is real,  
so it may be probably pre-  
sum'd to be the most ancient  
now extant in the World ;  
for

for tho it be plac'd next before the Book of *Psalms*, because compos'd like them in Metrical Numbers, yet it is probable that this Book was written by *Moses*, the most ancient Writer, and before any of those *Five Books* which are plac'd first in our *Bibles*.

For there are good Reasons upon which learned Men conjecture that *Job* lived in the time of the Patriarchs, being a Nephew of *Abraham*, descended from *Esau*; and that *Moses* met with this *History* of him while he sojourn'd in the Land of *Midian*, where he translated it out of the *Arabian* into the *Hebrew Language*; and

and compos'd the Discourses between *Job* and his three Friends in that *Metre* in which we now read them; and that when he return'd to his Brethren in *Egypt*, he presented this Book to them, to teach them *Patience* under their *Afflictions* from *Job's* Example, and to confirm their *Faith* and *Hope* in the Divine Mercy, from the *Deliverance* and *Reward* which God wrought for him: of which an antient Author, under the Name of *Origen*, is so certain, that he recites a *Speech* made by *Moses* to the People of *Israel*, when he publish'd this excellent Book among them.

But

But this *History* is not more considerable for its *Antiquity* than for its *Usefulness*, which acquaints us with several important *Truths*, that we could not know but by *Revelation*, and which are not declared so expressly in any other part of the Holy Scriptures, as in this Book, and also sets before us an eminent *Pattern of Patience*, to instruct and support us under the many *Troubles* to which we are here always obnoxious.

For first in perusing this *History* we meet with such considerable *Truths* as these.

1. That God takes a particular and kind notice of all his Faithful Servants, and reflects

flects on them with Complacency, and is ready to bear an honourable *Testimony* of their Innocence; for thus he *speaks*, and even *boasts* of his Servant Job to Satan, *Hast thou considered my Servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright Man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?* Which is a great Incouragement to a good Man, that tho the Devil *accuse* him, his Friends *reproach* him, and the World *condemn* him, yet God that searcheth the Heart doth *approve* and *commend* him.

Chap. i. v. 8.

2. We are informed also from this *History*, how Satan dares to *accuse*, even to God

B            him.

Ch. I. v. 9, &amp;c.

himself, his most Faithful Servants, if not of outward Scandal, yet of inward Hypocrisy; for thus the Lying Spirit drew up a Charge against Job: Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a Hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land: But put forth thy Hand, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy Face. And when this Pretence was refuted, he again suggests, That if God would put out his Hand, and touch his Bone and Flesh, he would curse God to his Face.

Chap. 2. v. 5.

Whence

Whence we may learn how Satan is call'd the *Accuser of the Brethren*, who accuseth them before God Day and Night; and how great a *Priviledg* the Gospel hath discover'd to us, that we have the *Son of God* to be our *Advocate*, to justify us in the *Court of Heaven*, against the malicious *Allegations* of this *Adversary*. This also may render an easy account of the *perverse Malice* of Wicked Men, who take great Pleasure in reproaching the Faithful Servants of God, if not of any apparent *Wickedness*, yet of some latent suspected *Hypocrisy*, for they being of their Father the Devil, his Lusts they will do; who is a *Liar*, and the Father of Lies.

Rev. 12.  
10.

Joh. 8.44.

3. We may hence also discover that those Calamities which befall Mankind, are chiefly wrought by the Agency of the Devil, who is describ'd in the Scripture, as the *Prince of the Power of the Air*, the *Destroyer*, a *Murderer from the beginning*, the great *Tempter and Tormenter* of Men, the chief *Author* of all *Evil*, either of *Sin* or of *Misery*: who sometimes tempts Men to *mischieve themselves*, sometimes to *mischieve others*; and who can use *Fire*, or *Water*, *Clouds*, or *Wind*, or other *Creatures* to be the *Means* and *Instruments* of our *Ruine*.

Thus Job fear'd lest he might have *Tempted* his *Children* to *abuse themselves* at their *Feast*.

Thus

Thus he stirr'd up the *Sabeans* and *Caldeans* to rob *Job*, and procur'd a *Fire from Heaven* to consume his *Cattel* and *Servants*, and a *strong Wind* from the *Wilderness* to overturn the *House*, in which his *Children* were *Feasting*; and those *ill Humours* in *Job's Body* which broke out in *Boils* from *Head* to *Foot*.

Which *Discovery* may be of use to guard us with the strictest *Caution*, and strongest *Indignation* against that *Tempter*, who is so great an *Enemy*; and may also help us to conceive how some extraordinary *Calamities*, which sometimes surprize us, are produc'd, tho no other *natural causes* of them do appear.

4. We may further learn from this *History* that the Devil and his *Legions*, with all their *Malice & Power*, are able to effect no *Mischief* against us, but then only, and so far as God gives them permission: For we find that the Devil could not hurt Job, tho' eager in his *Malice* against him, till God said to him, *Behold all that he hath is in thy Power*: And at first he could not hurt his Person, because God restrain'd him by a Prohibition, only upon himself put not forth thy Hand. And when the Devil sought to have his Commission enlarg'd, God gave him Power over Job's Body, saying *Behold he is in thy Hand*, yet then also restrain'd him with this

Chap. 1.  
ver. 12.

Chap. 2.  
ver. 6.

this Exception, *But save his Life.*

And this is matter of great Comfort and Incouragement to us, that we are not abandon'd to the *powerful Malice* of the Devil, that tho he goes about as a *roaring Lion* seeking to devour, yet he cannot go beyond the *Tedder* of his Chain; that an *Almighty Wisdom* and *Goodness* watcheth over us in a *continual Providence*, and that God will be *faithful to us* in not suffering 1 Cor. 10. 13. us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, and will with every *Temptation* make a way for us to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

5. We are also inform'd from hence, that God doth  
B 4      some-

Sometimes permit the Devil to afflict his Servants, not out of *Wrath* against them, but only to approve and exercise their Graces, for the Advancement of his own *Glory* and of their *Praise*, and for the increase of their *Graces* here, and of their *Rewards* hereafter.

This is evident from the *Character* God gives of *Job*, and the *Favour* and *Delight* he expresseth towards him, both before and after his *Sufferings* ;  
Ch. 2. v. 3. The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my Servant *Job*, that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright Man, one that feareth God, and escheweth Evil ? and still he holdeth fast his Integrity, altho thou movedst

*movedst me against him, to destroy him without a cause.*

This may support and encourage us under any Sufferings, when our Consciences can attest our Integrity as *Jobs* did; and teach us to suffer chearfully for *God's* sake, when we do not suffer for *our own*. This may also restrain us from making any reproachful Reflections upon the Afflictions of *God's* Servants, as *Job's* Friends did on his, because *God* may permit them for other wise and good Ends, beside that of Punishment.

2. This History doth not only teach us such useful Lessons, but also exhibits to us a very eminent pattern of Meekness and

and *Patience*, very needful to *Instruct* and *Incourage* us in the difficult Duty of bearing, as we ought, those *Calamities* and *Afflictions*, which are our common Portion in this World.

Whilst we dwell in this lower World, deprav'd with the *Malignity* of Sin, and *Blasted* with the *Curse* of God's *Displeasure*, we cannot but expect to meet with a great variety of *Crosses* and *Disappointments*, *Miseries*, and *Calamities*, insomuch that *Suffering* is become at least one half of our Duty, and *Patience* is a Grace of as perpetual and common use as any other whatsoever.

And this part of our Duty is so *irksome* to *Flesh* and *Blood*,  
that

that we need the most *Forcible* Helps and Supports to contain us in the performance of it. Now nothing doth more *sensibly* incourage us under Sufferings, then proper and eminent *Examples*, which at once *Demonstrate* to us, that our Afflictions are *Tolerable*, because we see them Born by others, and also *excite* in us a generous *Emulation* to acquit our selves as well as our fellow Servants, who have been in a like or worse Condition.

But among all the Patterns of *Patience*, there is none comparable with this of *Job* (excepting that of our *Saviour* who was more than a Man) whom God seems to have *exercis'd*

*exercis'd* with such extraordinary Trials, and to have recorded his History in the Holy Scriptures *purposely* for our Imitation and *Incouragement*.

And that its great *usefulness* herein may more appear, let us a little display and view over this illustrious *Example*. Behold here a *perfect* and *upright* man undergoing the *heaviest Calamities*, falling from the height of prosperity into the lowest depth of Misery, surpriz'd by his Calamities on a sudden, which came upon him altogether, without *Intermission*, and were of so extraordinary a Nature as, at once, to deprive him of all his *Comforts*, and plunge him into the lowest State

State of *Wretchedness* : For, all his great *Estate*, which according to those Times and Countries, consisted of *Servants* and *Cattel*, was in one day consumed by *Sabeans* and *Caldeans*, and a *Fire* from Heaven.

And as soon as he knew himself to be reduced to perfect *Poverty*, he is told also that he is become *Childless*, and that his Children perish'd together, by an unusual Death, under the *Ruins* of the House in which they were *Feasting*, Nor was he only strip'd naked of all his *outward* comforts, but the Calamity seizeth on his *Person* too, and spreads over him a most *Noisome* and *Painful* disease. And that the good Man

Man might have *nothing* to support him under all this *Misery*, but *God* and his own *Conscience*, his *Wife*, who should have been his *Helper*, became his *Tempter*, and his *Friends* did but *Aggravate* his sorrows with harsh *Censures* and unjust *Reproaches*. What *Estate* on this side of *Death* can we conceive more *Calamitous* than this?

Let us now reflect on this *Worthy wretched Man*, and behold his *Behaviour*, and admire his *invincible Patience*. When *Job* had heard that he was *depriv'd* of all his *Estate* and his *Children* too, he indeed *Rent* his *Mantle*, and *shav'd* his *Head*, and *fell down on the Ground*, as one that was not  
stu-

stupidly insensible of such extraordinary Events; but withal he *worship'd* toward Heaven, and expres'd his *Resentments* in this Pious Devout acknowledg-ment. Naked came I out of Chap. i. my Mothers Womb, and Naked v. 21, 22. shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord. And the Holy Ghost makes this Reflection on his behaviour in the next Verse, In all this Job *sinned not*, neither charged God foolishly. When afterwards his Body was afflicted with the anguish and stench of unusual Boils, he contentedly sat him down among the Ashes, and reliev'd himself, as well as he could with

with the broken Potsherds that lay about him.

And when his Wife could no longer *suppress* her *Passions*, or *lengthen* out her *Patience*, but in a transport of *Fury* call'd on him to *curse* God and *Die* ; He replies, more *angry* with *Her* then with his *Condition*, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish Women speaketh* ; and that he might *Convince* as well as *Rebuke* her, he suggests to her consideration this reasonable Argument, *What ? shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil ?* And here the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to bear his Testimony a second Time that, *in all this Job sinned not with his Lips.*

This

This is a pattern that we cannot enough *admire*, but let us also labour to imitate it ; And that we may attain to such an excellent frame of Spirit, let us study well this short Argument wherewith *Job* govern'd his own Heart, and endeavour'd to restrain the impatience of his Wife, *What ? shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil ?*

The Argument is propos'd in the form of a Question, and accented with an unusual earnestness, that it might enter the Mind with a greater Force, and produce in it a more speedy and through Conviction.

We may resolve the Argument into these two parts.

C

L An

I. An Antecedent Suppos'd,  
That we *receive our Good*  
*from the Hand of God.*

II. A Consequent thereupon  
infern'd, That we *ought*  
*to receive any Evil from*  
*the same Hand.*

The plain Sense and Design  
of the Argument is this, That  
as we receive all our Blessings  
from God's *bountiful Hand*; so  
we should be ready to accept  
any *Afflictions* from his *correcting*  
*Hand.*

In discoursing on this Argu-  
ment, I design to do these three  
Things.

*First,*

*First*, To explicate its Sense, that we may fully understand those things which are express'd or implied in it.

*Secondly*, To discover the Force of the Argument, that we may be convinced by it.

*Thirdly*, To apply it, for directing and containing us in the Discharge of so necessary a Duty.

*First*, I begin to explain the Argument, That we may understand those Things which are express'd or implied in it: And this may be sufficiently done by inquiring into these three Things.

1. What is that *Good* and *Evil* which are mention'd in the Argument?

2. What that *Hand* is by which this Good and Evil is dispens'd?

3. How we should receive both Good and Evil from that *Hand*.

1. Let us consider what that *Good* and *Evil* is which is express'd in the Argument? It is plain enough from the Context, that *Job* did design by *Good* and *Evil*, nothing else but those Temporal *Blessings* and *Calamities*, of both which he had so great a share, as this History describes. And tho most Men are quick enough of Sense in the things of this World, to distinguish between *Good* and *Evil*; so that they need not be told that Riches and Ho-  
nours,

nours, Health and Long-Life are *good Things*, and that Poverty and Disgrace, Sickness and Death are *evil Things*; Yet they are perchance very few who understand the *Nature* or *Degree* of that *Goodness* or *Evil* which are ascrib'd to the things of this World, and therefore it may be needful to teach them this piece of *Sacred Philosophy*: That Man being compounded of such different parts as a *Spirit* and a *Body*, he hath consequently very *different Interests*, such as are *Spiritual*, and such as are *Carnal*, and that *those* excel *these*, as much as a *Spirit* doth excel a *Body*: from whence we should infer, that those things are *Good* or *Evil* to a Man

in the *highest* sense, which can promote or destroy the *noblest Interests* of his *Spiritual* part, and those things are Good or Evil but of an *inferior Kind* or in a *lower Degree*, which concern the welfare only of the *Body*.

Now the things of this lower World about us, do not in their Natures import any *Good* or *Evil* to that *Soul* which is the chief part of the Man; for a Man may abound in *Riches*, and yet be destitute of true *Wisdom*; he may cover a *deformed Mind* with a *beautiful Body*: or the more the *outward Man* decays, the *inward Man* may be renewed. Yea these Temporal things are *indifferent* of themselves

selves to become either *Good* or *Evil* to us, according as they are *blest* by God, and improv'd by us : for *Riches, Honours, and Pleasures* may prove very evil Things, if they *debauch* our Minds with *Vanity* and *Pride* ; and *Poverty, Disgrace, and Sickness*, which we make the instances of *Adversity*, may become very good Things to us, if they render our Minds more *Sober & Teachable*, and our Hearts more *Meek* and *Submissive*.

Wherefore the *Stoicks*, who in Matters of Morality came nearest to the Institutions of our *Holy Religion*, were Unanimous and confident in this *Maxime*, that there was no *Good* or *Evil* but only *Virtue*

Doctores  
sapientie  
securus est,  
qui sola  
bona quæ  
honestæ;  
mala tan-  
tum quæ  
turpia,  
potentiam  
nobilita-  
tem, cate-  
rag; extra  
animum  
neq; bonis  
neq; malis  
annume-  
rant. Tacit.  
Hist. lib. 4.

and Vice. So Tacitus describes Helvidius Priscus, That he followed those Masters of Wisdom, who taught that those Things only were Good which were Honest, and only those things Evil which were dishonest, but Power, Honour, and other such things which affected the outward Man, they accounted not to be either Good or Evil. And tho we Acknowledg that they went too far in this Assertion, and that According to the style of the Holy Scriptures we are allow'd to call Temporal things Good or Evil, and there be this plain Reason for it, because these things respect the Interests of the Body which is a part of the Man, tho the ignoblest part in  
the

the Composition ; yet after all we must assert that these *outward* things are not *Good* or *Evil* in an *Absolute* sense with respect to the whole Man, or in the highest Sense with respect to his more valuable Interests ; and that in the *strictest* Sense those things only deserve to be accounted good or evil to a Man, which can affect the *Spiritual* interests of his Soul.

These notions will be very useful to us for Proportioning our *Estimations* and *Affections* toward the things of this World ; for allowing them to be in *some degree* *Good* or *Evil*, we shall be dispos'd to thank God for *Temporal Blessings*, and to humble our Selves under his  
Tempo-

*Temporal Corrections* ; but knowing withal that there are other things which relate to our *Spiritual Interests* , which do comparatively far exceed them in their *Goodness* or *Evil*, we shall be induc'd to regard *these* with our *highest Estimations*, and our *strongest Affections*.

2. We are next to consider what that Hand is, which dispenseth to us both our *Good* and *Evil* things ; the Text asserts it to be the *Hand* of God, which can import nothing else but the *Power* and *Influence* of his continual *Providence*, whereby he sustains the *Beings* he hath given us, and disposeth of all *Events* and *Circumstances* about us, so that nothing doth or can befall us,

us, *without*, or *contrary* to the *Council of his Will*. This hand of providence deals out to every Man that proportion of *Good* or *Evil*, which the divine Wisdom thinks fit to assign to him, so that nothing happens to us by a blind *Fortune*, or an *unaccountable Fate*, but by the Conduct of that good God, who is the great *Creator* and *Sovereign* of the whole World.

If therefore there be any Creatures about us which are *Good* or *Hurtful* to us, it was the *Hand* that made them, which put those *Qualities* into them. If any *Good* accrue to us thro' our own *Skill* and *Industry*, or by the *Care* and *Favour* of our *Friends*, we must acknow-

acknowledg that *We*, or our *Friends*, are but *Instruments* in the *Hand* of God, for conveying such *Blessings* to us: Or if we suffer thro' our own *Default*, or the *Injury* of other Men, we are to account of our *selves* or our *Enemies*, as *Rods* in his *Hand*, whereby he inflicts such *Punishments* upon us.

1 Chron.  
29. 11, 12.

Thus the pious King of Israel acknowledged to God: *All that is in Heaven or in Earth is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted above all; both Riches and Honour come of thee, in thy Hand is Power and Might, and in thine Hand it is to make great, and to give Strength unto all.* So on the other Hand the Prophet demands, *Shall there*  
be

*be Evil in a City and the Lord hath* Amos 3.6.  
*not done it ? and with respect to*  
*both kind of Events, God him-*  
*self declares, I form the Light,* Isa. 45. 7.  
*and create Darknes; I make Peace,*  
*and create Evil ; I the Lord do all*  
*these things. And the Hand of*  
*God doth thus concern it self*  
*not only in the greatest and most*  
*important Events, but also in*  
*those which may seem most*  
*slight and inconsiderable to us:*  
*for our Saviour assures us that*  
*God numbers our very Hairs, and* Luke 12.  
*that a Sparrow cannot fall to the* 6, 7.  
*Ground without his Knowledg.*

A right *Apprehension* , and  
firm *Perswasion* of our entire  
*Dependence on the Hand of Di-*  
*vine Providence, in managing*  
*and ordering our Conditions in*  
this

this World, would have a very great influence on our Religious Devotion; for who would not be careful to please him who hath the dispensing of all Blessings and Curses? to whom shall we direct our Prayers for what we want, or our Thanksgivings for what we enjoy, but to that bountiful Hand which is the Fountain of all our Blessings? Or what can make us more Meek and Patient under Correction, than the sight of that Almighty Hand which holds the Rod and lays on the Stroke?

3. We are in the last place to consider how we should receive both Good and Evil from the Hand of God. Job hath used but one word with respect

respect to both sort of Events, and that word, doth properly denote such an *Acceptance* as that wherewith we entertain a Gift from a Superior, with a cheerful Reverence, and a graceful acquiescence. Now tho the design of the Argument would require only to explain how we ought to receive our evil Things from God's correcting Hand, yet inasmuch as we are equally concern'd in the Duty of receiving Good as of receiving Evil; I think it will be worth our while, to Study out the right *Art* of doing both; in order to which I shall take both parts of this Duty under a distinct Consideration.

Debemus accipere five excipere cum affectu, lubentia reverentia & acquiescentia; id enim לקב"ל significat, nempe לקב"ל accipere quod ad Donum sua natura refertur. Cocceius in locum.

1. The right manner in which we should receive our good Things from the Hand of God, doth consist chiefly in this threefold disposition of Mind, viz. that we receive God's blessings with a *contented*, *thankful*, and an *honest* Mind.

(1.) We should receive our good Things from God with a *contented* Mind, i.e. with a Mind that can contain it self within those Injoyments which God thinks fit to allow; so as to be *well pleas'd* with his *Blessings* of whatever *Kind*, in whatever *Degree*, by whatever *Means*, or at whatever *Time* confer'd upon us; not to *despise* our *Blessings*, or to be *dissatisfied* with them because they are not of  
*such*

*such a sort, or not so much, or do not come in such a way, or so soon as we would have them, and that we do not look askew on them with an evil Eye, or receive them awkwardly with an unwilling Hand.*

And to promote so good a Disposition of Mind, we should consider that God is the *absolute Lord* of all his Blessings, and may do with his *own* as he *pleaseth*; that his *Hand* is guided by an *unerring Wisdom*, so as to dispense them in an exact Proportion to every Mans Capacities and *Necessities*; that he is not stinted by any *Penury* of Blessings, or *Envy* of our Happiness; that he could and would give more or sooner if he saw it fit for

D

us;

us; that therefore it becomes us to contain our *Desires* within the same *Bounds*, which his *Wisdom* hath prescrib'd to his own *Bounty*, to accept of our *Share* which the great *Master* of the *Family* of the *World* hath allotted to us among the rest; lest by any *dissatisfaction* we reflect on *God*, as if he err'd in giving too little, or on our *Selves* in desiring too much.

If then *God* thinks fit to give us only *Necessaries*, let us stop our *Desires* there, and not hanker after *Superfluities*; if *God* gives us *Health* and *Strength*, let us be contented if we are not also *Rich*; let us be pleas'd and satisfied with the *Children* he gives us, the *Friends* he raiseth up for

us, the Station he assigns to us, and the Comperency he provides for us. And if he think fit to send us any good Things thro' our own Industry, or the Charity of others, let us not be discontented, tho' we must labour or be beholden for them: and if our Blessings come not so soon as we desired, yet let it satisfy us that they come in that Season which Infinite Wisdom thought most fit. Let us learn with St. Paul, *How to want, and how to abound, and in all estates to be contented;* and practise that Duty which he prescribes to all Christians, *Let your Conversation be without Covetousness, and be content with such Things as ye have.*

Phil. 4. 11

Heb. 13. 5

(2.) We should receive good Things from God's Hand with a Thankful Mind, i. e. with a Mind dispos'd to acknowledg with grateful Affections God's great Bounty toward us, and the Returns we owe to him for it.

To this end, we should keep on our Minds such Apprehensions of God, and our Selves, and of the Blessings we receive, as will promote and cherish in us the most grateful Resentments. We should take care that we do not injuriously deny, or carelessly overlook our great Benefactor, lest we withhold his Praises, or ascribe them to a wrong hand. We should consider how high a Priviledg it is, that the great God of Heaven will condescend

to take care of us in a *continual Providence*. We should consider also how *unworthy* we are of the *Blessings* we enjoy; or rather how much we *deserve* the *severest Punishments*. We should also rate the *Blessings* we receive with a just *value* and *esteem*; none should seem *small* to us which come from so *great* a God, to such *worthless* Persons; we should also consider how *innumerable* they are; how *constantly* and *continually* they flow into our Bosoms; and how *seasonable*, *useful* and *delightful* they prove to us.

And such Considerations as these should not only *start up* at the Receipt of some new Blessing, but should *dwell* in our

Minds, to affect them always with a grateful Sense of the immense Goodness & plenteous Bounty of our great Benefactor.

If God's Blessings find us thus dispos'd, they cannot fail of a most affectionate Entertainment; for the Thoughts which acknowledge and admire the Riches of Divine Goodness, will easily inflame the Heart with a strong Love to God, as to the best of Patrons, the kindest Friend, and most indulgent Parent; they will melt us into sorrow for the inexcusable ingratitude of affronting and grieving so good a God in time past, and excite in us the most earnest Resolutions of an entire Devotion to him for the time to come.

And

And out of the abundance of the Heart thus dispos'd, our Mouths will speak forth his Praise, and our own Thankfulness. We shall not forbear to boast of God and his Favour towards us, to declare his Goodness, and to bless his Name both in our private and publick Devotion.

And these Cords of Love which ingage our Hearts will easily contain us in our Duty to so good a Lord; and oblige us to be diligent, faithful and cheerful in his Service, and make us very zealous for his Glory. Every Blessing receiv'd by such a grateful Mind will fall like Rain on good Ground, and bring forth much Fruit to the praise of him that sent it.

With such Returns of Praise and Thankfulness we should always correspond with our great Benefactor, sending up to Heaven our Tributes of Gratitude, in some proportion to the Blessings God sends down to us; which is not more our Duty than it is our Interest; for as our God doth infinitely excel us in Goodness, so he regards more kindly the unprofitable Returns we make to him, than we do all the invaluable Blessings he bestows on us, and will not fail to exceed our Gratitude with his Bounty.

After this manner have good Men dispos'd themselves for receiving the Blessings of Heaven; among whom we need

no better Pattern than the Royal Psalmist, whose devotional Addresses consist chiefly of returns of Praise and Thanks, who had fix'd his Heart, and tun'd his Lyre purposely to this Duty, and resolv'd to continue in it as long as he had a being; who also often invites all other Men, yea all the Creatures of God, to join in Consort with him, as sharers with him in the Blessings of Divine Bounty.

(3.) We should receive our good Things from the Hand of God with an honest Mind, i. e. which a Mind honestly dispos'd to acquire God's Blessings in his own Way, and to imploy them only to that End for which he designed them.

IF

If we project to obtain any Blessings by indirect Courses and unlawful Means, we shall not receive, but rather snatch them out of the Hand of Providence; for he defrauds or robs God of his Blessings, who procures them by Injustice, Violence, or Deceit; and if God suffer him to succeed therein, he must at last expect a Mixture of Sorrow with them; as Jacob's Blessing was embitter'd which he fraudulently wrested from his deluded Father.

We shall also greatly abuse God, if we Use his Blessings to any other purpose than he intended. How loud an Impiety must it needs be to make our Holy God a Caterer for our Lusts,

Lusts, by making his Blessings a Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof? To imploy the Riches he bestows, to entertain out Luxury; the Honour he confers, to feed our Pride; the Power he intrusts us with, to revenge ourselves, or oppress our Neighbour; or the Health and Strength he preserves to us, to sin against him more presumptuously? What blacker Ingratitude and Injustice can we be Guilty of, then to fight against God with his own Weapons; to serve the Devil with the Blessings of Heaven; and to make those things to become Evil, which God sent for Good?

If we do thus, we not only forfeit God's Blessings, but even necessitate him to take them from us, in his own Vindication; as he threatned Israel by the Prophet Hosea, She did not know that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oyl, and multiplied her Silver and Gold which they prepared for Baal; therefore will I return to take away my Corn in the Time thereof, and my Wine in the season thereof, and will recover my Wool, and my Flax, given to cover her Nakedness.

Whenever we receive a Blessing, we should consider that he is the Lord who gave it, and we are his Servants or Stewards that receive it; that therefore we cannot honestly put it to  
any

any other Use than our Lord hath Appointed or Allowed; and must expect to be one Day call'd to an Account of the Blessings we have receiv'd; and if we have not put them to a good Use, or perverted them to a bad one; we shall be condemn'd as Wicked or Slothful Servants; as our Saviour hath Matth. 25. Taught us in his Parable of the Talents.

If then God in his bounty bestows Riches on us, let us receive them with an honest Resolution to abound Proportionably in good Works; If he advance us to Honour, let us become thereby more illustrious Patterns of Piety to the World; If he confer Power and Authority

ty upon us, let us use it to maintain his Cause, protect his Servants, and suppress the Enemies of his Religion; If he bless us with a long Life, and a continued Health, let us be more abundant and unwearied in his Service; let us receive every Blessing with no other design, than to imploy it in the Service and to the Honour of him that sent it.

And as God intends to engage us more closely to himself by all the Obligations he lays upon us; so upon the receipt of every Blessing, especially of such as are most remarkable, we should solemnly and heartily devote our Selves to God, as Jacob did in that pious Vow.

Vow. If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me Bread to eat, and Raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's House in Peace, than shall the Lord be my God. Gen. 28.  
20, 21.

II. Let us pass on to consider how we ought to receive our evil Things from God's correcting Hand. The design of the Argument is not that we should barely partake of these evil Things, for that is not in our Power to prevent; but that we should receive or accept them in a right Manner; and the Art of doing so, doth consist chiefly in this threefold Disposition of Mind, viz. that we

we receive any *evil Things* from God's correcting Hand, with *Meekness* and *Humility*; with *Patience* and *Long-Suffering*; and with a *Cheerful* and *well-pleased Mind*.

*First*, We should receive any *evil Things* from the Hand of God with *Meekness* and *Humility*, i. e. with a Spirit *lowly* and *Submissive*, as to yield quietly and easily to the *Corrections* God inflicts, without recoiling in angry *Passions*, or reflecting in discontented *Murmurs*, or returning any sort of *Revenge* against God, or the *Instruments* he useth in correcting us.

*Meekness* and *Humility* are those *passive Graces*, which render

render our Spirits *soft* and *gentle*, *yielding* and *impressive*, and thereby *susceptive* of *Corrections*; but the *stroak* that falls on a *hard* Heart, *rebounds* in the Face of him that strikes, and a *proud* Heart will *rise* up against the *weight* of *Affliction*, like a *Spring* against the *Hand* that *depresseth* it.

The Man whose passions are not *broken* and *tam'd* by *Discipline*, must be *nail'd* to the *Cross* which he is to suffer, but he will never submit to *take* it up and *bear* it; he will *kick* and *roar* under his *Corrections*, and often *accuse* and *blaspheme* the *Author* of his *Troubles*. The *murmuring Israelites* when *distress'd* in the *Wilderness*

E spake

Pfal. 78. 19 *spake against God, saith the Psalmist. Such the Prophet*  
 Isa. 3. 21. *describes, who when hungry would*  
*fret themselves, and curse their*  
*King and their God. Of such*  
 Rev. 16. *we read in the Apocaylipse,*  
 9, 11. *who would blaspheme the God of*  
*Heaven, that had Power over their*  
*Plagues, because of their pains and*  
*sores.*

But the Servants of God who  
 had other Spirits, could receive  
 their evil Things after another  
 Manner. When old Eli heard  
 the heaviest Doom from God, he  
 meekly entertain'd it, saying, *It is*  
 1 Sam. 3. *the Lord, let him do what seemeth*  
 18. *him good. When David was*  
*flying before his rebellious Son,*  
*whom God, according to his*  
*Denuntiation, had rais'd up*  
*against*

against him, he humbly submitted, saying, Behold, here I am, <sup>2 Sam. 19. 26.</sup> let him do to me as seemeth good unto him. The evil Things which our blessed Saviour receiv'd, and the Meekness and Humility wherewith he receiv'd them, transcend all other Patterns. He endur'd the contradiction of Sinners, the most and worst that ever was, with such Meekness, that when he was reviled, he reviled <sup>1 Pet. 2. 23</sup> not again; when he Suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. When he was to receive from his Fathers hand that cup of Fury, at the apprehension of which the human nature stagger'd; tho' he deprecated it, if possible, to be avoided; yet, if not, he humbly

Mat. 26.  
39.

submitted to it, saying, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

With a like meekness and lowliness of Spirit should we be always dispos'd, to receive easily, to resent mildly, to suffer quietly any strokes of Correction from the Hand of God. We should consider the Greatness and Authority of him that strikes, with whom we may not, we cannot contend; and we should reflect impartially upon our own Guilt, which hath made us justly obnoxious to greater Evils than this World can produce.

We should thus reason with our selves; Will it become us to be provok'd by a Punishment, who have much more provok'd

God

God by our Sin? Shall we think much of the *smart* of his Rod, who have so often griev'd his *holy Spirit*? Dare we in one *Thought* or *Passion* to oppose that *Almighty Justice*, which we cannot conquer, but may farther irritate by our rebellious *Opposition*?

When therefore we receive any *Cross* or *Loss*, or any other sort of *Affliction* from the Hand of God, we should immediately look within, give a *charge* to our *Hearts*, set a *guard* on our *Passions*, and a *watch* before the door of our *Mouth*, that we fall into no *Disorders* or *Indecencies*; either, with *David*, we should be dumb, and not open our *Mouths*, because it is God's doing: Psal. 39.9.

or, with Job, take care that we do not sin with our Lips by charging God foolishly.

And let me add, That we should take care to suppress all proud or angry Passions against the Instruments that God useth in correcting us, because they will ultimately strike at God himself. When we curse our Stars, or fret against the cross Events that befall us, we reflect upon that Providence by which all things are manag'd; If we malign and pursue the Enemy that hath done us a Mischief, we wound God thro' his Side, who thought fit to order and permit that we should be Corrected by such an Instrument; However therefore the Affliction comes, let

let us humbly and meekly submit, without contending or quarrelling with God or Man, or with the World about us.

So David when most maliciously and reproachfully Curs'd by Shimei, govern'd his Spirit, saying, So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David; let him alone, let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him; it may be that the Lord will look upon mine Affliction, and requite me Good for his Cursing me this Day. With such meekness could this humble King receive so great a Provocation, from one of his Subjects, out of reverence to Almighty God who was the supreme Author of his Sufferings.

2 Sam. 16.  
10, 11.

Secondly, We should receive our evil Things from the Hand of God with a proportionable Patience and long-Suffering, i. e. with such a passive fortitude or firmness of Spirit, as will not sink under the Burden, or faint under the Anguish, or grow weary under the continuance of our Sufferings.

As soon as the Affliction seizeth us, we should immediately apply our Care to put ourselves into a posture of Bearing it ; we should recollect our Spirits, and summon up all our spiritual Forces ; we should fortify our Minds with the strongest Arguments, and fix our Hearts with the firmest Resolutions, and so buckle to the Burden  
we

we are to bear, and put out our strength in assailing the Difficulties which encounter us.

We should watch over our Spirits with a prudent Jealousy; and with a generous Indignation suppress any base Thoughts or mutinous Passions, that may enfeeble and dishearten us, or tempt us to seek a Redress by any unlawful Means.

And we must beware of limiting our Spirits with any fond Conceits, that we can bear but so much, or so long; and think of providing no less Patience than what may be equal to the Evils we are to bear. If God call us to bear a heavy Cross, we must receive it with a proportionable strength of Patience; if he visit

visit us with a long Sickne/s, we must endure it with a no less long-Suffering? if he try us with the loss of a dear Child or Friend that is never to be retrieved, we must provide a Patience that will be as endless and perpetual.

We should consider, that God sends us such Evils, not only to punish us, but also to exercise and try us; which therefore we should receive as becomes good Souldiers and Servants, approving our ability and readiness to sustain them for his Honour, and our own Commendation.

We should encourage and confirm our Patience, by placing before our Eyes the brave Examples of our Fellow-Servants, who

who have approv'd their *Fortitude* in as great *Trials* as those with which we are exercis'd; and by calling to mind those *Divine Promises*, which assure us infallibly of a *sufficient Assistance* here, and a *glorious Crown* in Heaven.

We should with our evil Things, receive also those *Admonitions* and *Exhortations*, those *Directions* and *Encouragements* which God hath given us in his Holy Word, to enable us to bear them, viz. That in *Patience* we possess our Souls; that *Patience* should have its perfect work, That, we despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his Correction; that if we faint in the day of our Adversity, our Strength is small:

Luke 21.

19.

Jam. 1. 4.

Prov. 3. 11.

Prov. 24.

10.

*small*: For as it is a sign of a *weak Body*, to be disorder'd by every ill *Accident*; so it is no less of a *weak Mind*, to droop or fret under the *Afflictions* which befall us.

This History presents us with great Instances both of *Prowess* in *Job*, and of *Weakness* in his *Wife*; for he bore up with a *strength* and *length* of *Patience*, that the Devil could not overcome, with all the *Loads* of *Misery* he heap'd upon him; but she, tho' she suffer'd less, yet being of a weaker and shorter *Spirit*, was soon overcome; and to that degree of *Impatience*, that she advis'd her *Husband* to seek *Ease*, tho' in *Death* it self; and by *cursing God*, to provoke him

him to put an end to a miserable  
Life.

*Thirdly*. We should receive  
any evil Things from the Hand  
of God with a *cheerful* and *well-*  
*pleased* Mind ; so as to approve  
of God's dealing with us, to  
*justifie* and *bless* him while he is  
*correcting* us ; to *consent* to, and  
accept kindly his fatherly *Chastise-*  
*ments* ; and to keep up a *hopeful*  
*confidence* in his Mercy, amidst  
our greatest Distresses.

The former requisites were  
chiefly *Negative*, which only  
restrain'd us from *resisting* or  
*fainting* under God's correcting  
Hand ; but this is *positive*, and  
imports somewhat *higher* and  
*greater*, even a *voluntary* and  
*cheerful Concurrence* with God in  
the

the Corrections he inflicts.

We should like dutiful Children reverence the ~~crowns~~ of our Father's Displeasure, acknowledge his just Authority and our own Demerit; and render Thanks to him for his Paternal Care and Discipline over us, who in very faithfulness afflicts us. We should not only, not reject and nauseate the evil Things which God despenfeth, but receive them kindly and thankfully as the most useful Physick prescrib'd by the wisest and best Physician.

We should be so far from flying out, or snarling against the Instruments of our Correction, as even to Kiss the Rod, to bless them that Curse us, and to Pray for them that Despitefully use us.

Our

Our evil Things should not be forc'd upon us, but receiv'd by us with a willing Hand; we should not only endure the Temptation, but overcome it; not only bear it patiently, but cheerfully rejoyce under it. Thus St Paul prays for the Colossians that they might be strengthen'd Col. 1.11. with all might according to the glorious Power of God, unto all Patience, and long-Suffering, and that even with Joyfulness.

And in such a manner have God's Servants been able to receive the worst Dispensations from him; they took joyfully the Heb. 10. 34. spoiling of their Goods, they were as 2 Cor. 6. 10. grieved, yet always rejoycing. Thus particularly did David receive the many evil Things with which

which he was Exercis'd, still Acknowledging that God was Righteous in all his ways, that all his Paths are Mercy and Truth to them that fear God; that in very faithfulness God afflicted him, and that it was Good for him that he was Afflicted.

Thus also did Job worship the God who permitted him to be so severely treated, and justified, and bless'd the Author of his Sufferings, saying, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.

And however strange and difficult this Rule may seem, yet it is not more than the wiser Heathens had learn'd. There is nothing that befalls me, saith

saith Senecca, that I would receive  
with a sad look, as a lowering Coun-  
tenance: every Thing should please  
Men that please God. I always,  
saith Epictetus, will take what  
comes to pass, for I account that  
better which God willeth, than what  
I will for my self; I adhere to him as  
his Servant and Disciple, I pursue,  
I desire, I entirely will with him.  
And the Royal Philosopher de-  
scribes a good Man to be one  
that will with all his Heart embrace  
any Events that Providence dis-  
penseth to him.

Senecc. Ep.  
96. 75.

Epictet.  
L. 4. c. 7.

Antonin.  
L. 3. lib. 4.

The Christian hath much  
more reason to receive kindly  
and cheerfully any Events, which  
he believes are dispens'd to him  
by the wisest and kindest care of  
his Heavenly Father: He is assur-

red from the Word of God, that an Almighty Spirit shall help his Infirmities; and the Divine Blessing shall make all things work together for good to him. He is told, that the Man is happy whom God correcteth, and that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth. That the Man is blessed that endureth Temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life.

How well may this satisfy and please the Christian, that he is happy in God's account, when he seems most wretched in the Eye of the World? How cheerfully may he receive those evil Things, which are the Pledges and Tokens of God's Fatherly Care

Care and Favour towards him; which he knows are sent not to hurt, but cure him, to promote his *Spiritual Life* here, and his *Eternal Life* hereafter.

Let us therefore *aspire* to this excellent frame of Spirit, that we may be able to accept our evil Things as well as good, with a grateful Satisfaction. That we may be able to welcome Poverty, Sickness, or Death it self, as coming from so good a Hand, and tending to so good an End.

Secondly, Having now attained to a competent understanding of those things, which the Argument imports; let us proceed to consider its Force and Weight, that we may be

convinc'd and persuaded by it.

It was wisely design'd by Job, to recommend to us those evil Things to which we are naturally averse, by those good Things which attract us with Delight; that our receiving of the latter, may more easily induce us to accept the former. The Consequence of one to the other may be sufficiently evinc'd and confirm'd by several Reasons: of which I shall mention these Four:

1. That Supreme Authority of God over us, which is plainly manifested by the good Things we receive from him, should oblige us to receive dutifully any evil Things, which he thinks fit to dispense to us.

What

What other account can we give of the care of God's continual Providence over us, but that He is the Parent of those Beings he so indulgently cherisheth, and the Master of that Family, for the Members of which he so bountifully provides; and that consequently we are his Children and Servants, by whom we were made and are maintained? Know Psalm 100.3 ye, saith the Psalmist, that the Lord he is God, because he made us, and not we our selves; and we are his People, because the Sheep of his Pasture.

This Relation we stand in to God gives him a supreme and absolute Authority over us, whereby we are oblig'd to receive whatever he dispenseth to us,

and to submit our selves not only to be fed and maintain'd, but also to be disciplin'd and employ'd by him.

As therefore the Blessings we enjoy, are Proofs of God's Authority, and Badges of our Dependance on him; so they should be forcible Arguments, for submitting us readily to his Discipline and Disposal.

We expect no less from our own Children and Servants, than that they acknowledg our Authority, as well in correcting as maintaining them; and indeed we seem to collude with God, or over-reach him, when we share in his Blessings as part of his Family, and yet deny his Authority, when he thinks fit to correct us; for

for in Equity, if God hath no right to send us evil Things, we have no right to his good Things; and if we receive these, we oblige our selves thereby to accept the other also.

With this Argument from Authority, the Servants of God have usually contain'd and quieted their Minds, under the sharpest Afflictions. It is the Lord, saith old Eli, let him do what seemeth him good. I was dumb, saith David, and opened not my Mouth, because thou didst it. Job blessed the Name of that Lord, who had not more right to give than to take away; and contented himself with this Consideration, which the Septuagint have added to the

1 Sam. 3.  
18.

Psal. 39.9.

Job 1. 21. *Text, ὡς ἡ κηρία ἐδοξεν κυρίῳ ἐπελθεῖν, ὡς ἡ κηρία ἐδοξεν κυρίῳ ἐπελθεῖν, ὡς ἡ κηρία ἐδοξεν κυρίῳ ἐπελθεῖν,*  
 as it seemed good to the Lord, so  
 it came to pass.

2. If we receive all our good Things from God, we are oblig'd in *Gratitude* to him, to receive any evil Things he may require us to suffer for his sake.

If our *Gratitude* bear any proportion to the *Bounty* of God, we shall be as ready to receive any evil Things from him, as he is to bestow good Things upon us; and be very willing to accomplish his Will, and glorify his Name by our Suffering, who at first made and doth still maintain us for his Honour and Service.

He is a very ill-natur'd Servant, who can endure no Hazards

zards or Hardships for a good Master; he is not worthy the name of a Souldier, who will only receive his Pay, but declines all the Difficulties and Dangers of his Warfare. We should think him a very disingenuous Friend, who, after many considerable Kindnesses done for him, refuseth to bear with us in any thing that is cross to his Humour, or to undergo any trouble in doing for us some necessary office of Friendship. How then can we deal so perversely and frowardly with God, as to receive daily so many good Things from him, and yet to murmur against him and his Providence, upon every cross Event he dispenseth to us!

And our *Ingratitude* herein is so much the worse, as the good Things he bestows on us, are always more and greater than the evil Things he inflicts; for there is no Man wants so many Blessings as he enjoys, or can in this World meet with a Cross that is not out-weigh'd by some other Blessing he possesseth; at least ~~but~~ Life is more considerable than any Temporal Blessing we want, or any Calamity we suffer, for otherwise it could not be supported. Why then should a living Man complain? saith the Prophet. How basely ingrateful are we, if we cannot suffer a little from him, from whom we have receiv'd so much?

Lam. 3. 39.

3. If we receive good Things from God which we no way *Deserve*, it is very reasonable that we should receive evil Things which are justly *Due* to us.

The  *blessings*  we enjoy are the  *free-gift*  of God which we can never  *merit*  or  *exact*  from him ; but the  *Punishments*  we meet with, are the  *Fruit*  of our  *own Doings* , or the just  *wages*  of our  *Sin* . How  *absur'd*  then must it be for us to expect only good Things of which we are most  *unworthy*  ; and to  *refuse*  or  *quarrel*  at those evil Things, which we have justly  *deserv'd*  and procur'd to our Selves.

Shall a  *Profligat Criminal*  who hath forfeited his  *Life* , expect  
only

only the *Careffes* of his Prince's *Favour*, and think much of *induring* the *confinement* and *hardships* of a *Prison*? If God denied us all his *Blessings*; and allotted only *evil Things* to our *Share*, we could not charge him with any *Injustice*, or have any *just exception* against his *Providence*; but when our merciful God dispenseth to us a *mixture* of both, it would be a most *unreasonable* piece of *Fondness*, to accept only the good *Things* which he *frankly* gives, and to refuse the *Punishments* which he *justly* inflicts; or to quarrel at him for not giving us those good *Things* which he owes us not, or for sending us those *evil Things* which are of right  
due

due to us. Thus the Prophet  
*Jeremiah* expostulates in his La-  
 mentation; Why doth a living  
 Man complain, a Man for the Pu- Lam. 3. 39.  
 nishment of his Sin? He hath more  
 than his due by being a living  
 Man, and not more in bearing  
 the Punishment of his Sin.

4. If our evil Things come  
 out of the same kind Hand  
 which dispenseth our good  
 Things, we have reason to  
 think well of them, and to re-  
 ceive them with a contented cheer-  
 ful Mind.

That our God is very kind  
 and merciful, appears from the  
 many good Things we daily re-  
 ceive from him; and if he al-  
 so afflicts us, yet we may re-  
 joyce in this, that we are in good  
 Hands;

*Hands*; that we are under the Discipline of one that doth not afflict willingly, or take pleasure in grieving the children of Men; that he will not correct us immoderately but in Judgment; that his merciful Hand will support us, while the Hand of his Justice chastiseth us; and that he sends us evil Things, only to make us more capable of receiving the good Things he hath prepared for us.

If then all the Blessings we have receiv'd, can be but enough to assure us of the Goodness and Faithfulness of God, we shall never murmur or despond, but rather hope and rejoyce in his Mercy, under the worst Dispensations.

What

What is good should never be unwelcome to us, and nothing but what is good can come from our good God; for tho' we distinguish and call things Good or Evil, yet they are all good as they come from him, and may be improv'd by us. God who is not led by Passion, saith, St. Chrysostome, *καὶ ἐν ἐνέργειᾳ καὶ πολάζῃ*, whether he bless or correct, he is equally Good; Yea he is then best, saith Turtullian, when we think him best. Good. Whatever therefore is dispens'd to us by the Hand of God, we ought to approve and embrace as Good; as Hezekiah did that heavy Doom brought by the Prophet, saying, *Good is the Word of the Lord which thou hast spoken.*

Chrysost.  
ἀνδρ. ζ.  
Tunc  
maxime  
est opti-  
mus cum  
tibi non  
bonus.  
Tertul in  
Marc. 2.2.

2 Kings  
20. 19.

Thirdly,

ed *I* finally, I come in the last place to make some useful *Application* of the precedent *Discourse*, which may serve to exhort us to yield to this reasonable *Argument* of the *Text*; by resigning and submitting our selves entirely to the conduct of Divine Providence, for whatever good or evil Things shall fall to our *Lot*.

That we may more easily learn this general Duty, we may conveniently divide it into these two particular Lessons.

1. That by an entire resignation of our selves to God's disposal, we allow him to choose and order for us the Good or Evil which shall befall us; he being the Lord who hath the right of disposing both.

2. That

2. That we contentedly and cheerfully acquiesce in his choice; when he hath made, and declar'd it to us in the course of his Providence, receiving either Good or Evil from his Hand, as he hath thought most fit for us.

1. Let us be exhorted to resign up our selves entirely to God's disposal, to choose and allot for us whatever good or evil Things, he shall think fittest for us.

Almighty God hath an unquestionable right to dispose of us, and he will certainly make use of it whether we allow it or not; but it will best become us, and be most pleasing to God, that we should by our own Act deliberately and voluntarily resign

up our selves to his Conduct, and constitute him the disposer of us, and of all our Concernments, whereby we may make a great vertue of Necessity, discharge a necessary Duty, and give much Honour to God.

This self-Resignation imports many pious Acts of the Mind, our Acknowledgment and approbation of God's right and Authority, of his Wisdom and Faithfulness in disposing of us ; our choice of him for our Guide ; our consent to his Conduct ; yea our Heartly desire and humble Prayer to him, that he would condescend to manage and order our Condition for us ; and it will by consequence restrain us from intermeddling in that Affair we have

have entirely committed to his Management, by any anxious Cares, or eager Desires, or vain Curiosity of our own about it; so that we shall imploy our care only in doing what God hath made our Duty, leaving it wholly to the great Master of that Family to which we belong, to provide for us and dispose of us, as he shall think fit.

This we are taught in those Scriptures which require us to commit our selves, and our ways unto the Lord; to cast our Burdens and our Cares upon him, to trust in him, to rest on him; to be careful for nothing, but in all things by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgivings to make our requests known to God.

Psal. 31. 9.

Psal. 37. 5.

Psal. 55.

22.

1 Pet. 5. 7.

Psal. 37. 3.

5. 7.

Philip. 4. 6.

2 Sam. 15,  
25, 26.

Thus David when he fled out of Jerusalem, resign'd up himself most submissively to God's disposal, saying to Zadak, Carry back the Ark of God into the City: if I shall find favour in the Eye, of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his Habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth Good to him. And our Blessed Saviour, in a more extraordinary Case, suppress'd his own desires, and submitted himself entirely to his Fathers disposal, saying, Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Mat. 26.  
39.

Yea, we find this Duty excellently taught by a Heathen who thus adviseth; Dare to look

up to God and bespeak him after  
this Manner: Use me for the future Epictet.  
l. 2. c.  
16.  
as thou pleasest, for I am of the  
same Mind with thee, I refuse no-  
thing that seems Good to thee; cloath  
me as thou wilt, appoint me what  
Station thou thinkest fit, whether  
Publick or Private; to abide at home,  
or go into Bannishment; to be Poor  
or Rich, I will not only comply my  
self, but will justifie thy Providence  
by Apologies to the World.

Into such a *submissive Frame*,  
should we bring our Spirits,  
that we may leave off to carve  
and choose for our selves, and  
be well content to be at God's  
allowance and disposal, and al-  
ways ready to receive from his  
Hand whatever good Things  
he thinks to be Good convenient

for us, or whatever evil Things he thinks to be needful Physick for us.

2. Let us be exhorted also to acquiesce contentedly and cheerfully in whatever Choice God makes for us, when he declares it to us in the course of his Providence, whether it be of good or evil Things, or of whatever kind or degree they are.

We should shamefully affront God and contradict our selves, if after we have solemnly chosen, and consented to his Conduct, and by our Prayers besought him to take the care and charge of us, we should allow our selves to censure his Providence, to dislike his Management, and refuse our Lot; where-  
by

by we reflect on God's *Wisdom* or *Goodness*, or *Power* or *Faithfulness*, as if he could not, or would not do so well for us as we expected; or else discover our selves to be very weak and vain, froward and inconstant, like Children, never long of a Mind, difficult to be pleas'd, whom God himself is not able to satisfy.

We justly condemn the perverse Spirit of the Israelites, who after they had put themselves under God's Conduct, and promis'd to be very obsequious to it in their passage from Egypt to Canaan, yet murmur'd against him upon the slightest Occasions; dislik'd his Provision, tho' he cater'd for them by Miracles, and

Jude 16.

chose rather to return back to their House of Bondage, than to continue under the care and safe-guard of his Providence. And St. Jude, reproves such in his Time who were *ῥόγιστοι* *μεμψιμοιχοί*, Murmurers, who complain'd of the Lot which Providence had drawn for them.

We should be very cautious of dealing humourously or forwardly with the great God of Heaven, that we do not tempt or limit him, provoke and grieve him, as he sometimes complain'd of the People of Israel, lest he should cast us out of his Presence, and refuse to take any farther care of us; for how helpless and forlorn, how wretched and miserable must we needs be,

be, if God should *abandon* us to our own *Impotence* and *Folly*.

When therefore our wise and good God declares to us in the course of his Providence, that he hath appointed such a *state* or *condition* of *Life* for us in general, or hath allotted such *good* or *evil* Events to befall us in particular; we should forthwith, without *disputing* or *contending*, accommodate and conform our *Will* to his, accept thankfully the *Blessings* he sends, or bear patiently the *Corrections* he inflicts, being satisfied with this, that it is God's appointment, who hath right to dispose of us, and who knows better than we, what things are fit for us; that we have often in our Prayers resign'd up our selves  
to

to his disposal ; and that it is a high Priviledg that he will vouchsafe to take care of us ; that his Promise is a sufficient Security, on which we may rely, even when we cannot comprehend the design or reason of his dealing with us.

In such a manner did pious David conform himself to the Will of God, when declar'd to him in the course of his Providence. When his Child was sick he besought the Lord for it, and fasted, and lay all night upon the Earth ; but when the Child was dead, he arose, washed, anointed, changed his Apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshiped. And he gives this account of his Behaviour, *While the Child was yet alive,*

alive, I fasted and wept : for I said,  
Who can tell whether God will be  
gracious unto me, that the Child may  
live ? But now he is dead, wherefore  
should I fast ? can I bring him back  
again ? I shall go to him, but he shall  
not return to me. While the Child  
was sick he recommended him to  
God by Prayer, and when God  
had dispos'd of him as he thought  
fit, David acquiesc'd.

Abraham the Father of the  
Faithful, was no less obsequious to  
the Will of God, who without  
disputing the divine Command, left  
his Native Country, and follow'd  
Providence, tho' he knew not  
whither ; and offer'd up his only  
Son a Sacrifice to God, as soon  
as he was demanded, without  
any discontented Murmurs.

And

And our Blessed Saviour when dissuaded by St. Peter from submitting to the Sufferings which God had appointed for him, he rejected the fond advice with Indignation, saying, *Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me, for thou savourest not the things of God, but those that be of Men.* And when the same Apostle would have rescued him by violence from those Sufferings, our Lord forbade him, saying, *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

Mat. 16.  
23.

John 18.  
11.

To all which I cannot but add those excellent Sayings of an honest Heathen. *In all Affairs this should be our wish, Lead me O God, according to thy Decree, whither*

Epiſtet.  
6. 77, 78,  
79.

ther thou wilt, and I will follow cheerfully; and yet if I should be so wicked as to refuse to follow, yet follow I must of necessity. He that can accommodate himself to the necessity of Events is a wise Man, and understands the things of God. If then God will have it so, so be it.

Such then is the Duty we are exhorted to that we would choose no more than this only, that God would choose all things for us; and that we approve and accept of whatever choice he makes for us.

To inforce this Exhortation, I will subjoin a few Considerations, which may incline our Hearts to such a *submissive compliance*, with the conduct of Divine Providence.

It is our necessary Duty to do  
so,

so, and the contrary practice will involve us in a great deal of Guilt.

We may be convinced of this, not only from those express *Precepts* which frequently occur in the Holy Scriptures; but also from a *self-evident Law* inscrib'd upon our *Natures*. For inasmuch as we are *Creatures*, we are by *Nature* dependant both on the *will & power* of God from whom we receiv'd our Beings; and are consequently oblig'd to render him both *active and passive* Obedience, and do become as guilty in *rebelling* against his *will*, by not *suffering* what he *inflicts*, as by not *doing* what he *commands*.

If we attempt to *dispose* of our *selves*, or of the *Circumstances* of  
our

our Condition, we usurp upon God's Prerogative, we invade the Scepter of his Government, and become guilty of *High-Treason* against the Majesty of Heaven. For we thereby confront his Will with ours, we take upon us to dispose of his Creatures, to dispense his Blessings, to withstand his Corrections; which is in short to depose him from the Government, and to assume it to our selves.

2. It is our great Priviledg that we need not do more, than quietly commend and commit our selves to the care of Divine Providence.

It would indeed be very ill for us, if God should leave us, like Orphans, to our own care and disposal,

disposal, and should make our carking Sollicitudes, and toilsome Labours as necessary as we think them to be; How madly should we order our selves? How miserable should we soon make our selves? We understand not our own Wants or Capacities, or the fitness and usefulness of the things about us; we should be ready to choose any Evil that appears speciously, or to reject any Good that is not attended with fair and easy Circumstances; so foolish and humour some are the wisest Men, that if God left Events to their management, they would but disturb and destroy themselves, and the World about them.

Is it not therefore much better

ter that we may sit still, and not disquiet or mischief our selves with our *unwise Cares*, and *rash Projects*; and that the infinitely Good, the only *Wise*, and Almighty God, who is the *Master* of the great *Family* in which we live, our *Father*, and *Guardian*, will *vouchsafe* to take care of us, and *order* all things about us for our good? Why will we *toil* and *cark* for our selves, when we need not? What can we desire better than to be under the conduct of infinite *Wisdom*, and at the disposal of infinite *Goodness*?

3. It is in vain for us to attempt to do more, for after all our *projecting*, *wishing* and *striving*, tho' with never so great *Earnestness*,

H

nestness,

*nessness*, it is not in our Power to attain the good Things which God denies, or to refuse the evil Things which God appoints.

God hath fitted our Nature with faculties for doing so much as he intended to make our Duty, and therein we should assiduously imploy our selves; but as he never design'd to trouble us with governing the World, so he hath capacitated us with no Powers for so vast an Undertaking, but hath reserv'd it to himself, who hath most Right, and is best able to perform it.

We may as well make an attempt at God's work of Creation, as of Providence, for both greatly transcend our Skill and Power; or try if we can alter the

the *frame* of our Natures, as well as change the *circumstances* of our *Condition*; but, as our Saviour says, *we cannot make one Hair White or Black*, so neither Mat. 5. 36. can we of our selves make our *Condition* *better* or *worse* than God hath appointed.

If our *Experience* hath not long since convinc'd us of this, let us make an *Experiment* of our *Power*, in *changing the Weather*, in *preventing Sickness* and *Death*; and if we cannot command these *ordinary Events*, why should we think of *ordering others*! or rather why should we not leave off the *folly* of *attempting* what is *impossible* for us to perform.

4. There is great Peace,  
H 2 Plea-

*Pleasure, and Satisfaction in the performance of this Duty.*

He that hath heartily resign'd up himself to God's conduct and disposal, is become a happy Man, and leads the most easy, safe and delightful course of Life; for he hath unloaded his Mind of all his burdensome Cares, and dismaying Fears; he takes no thought what he shall eat, or drink, or where-withal he shall be cloathed, much less doth he distract himself with future Wants or distant Dangers, because his heavenly Father takes Care of him: He can wake, or sleep securely, and attend on his Duties without distraction; he can enjoy his Blessings with the greatest Cheerfulness, and bear his Afflictions with the

the greatest *Ease*, and be at all times well *pleas'd*, and fully *satisfied*, because the *wisest* and *best* of *Beings* hath undertaken to *manage* and *order* all *Things* for him.

And he that can contentedly *acquiesce* in the *Dispensations* of *Providence*, is free from the *uneasy* passions of *Grief* and *Shame*; he is never *disappointed*, never *discontented*; he never *envies* the *good* *Things* which are *dispens'd* to another, or *frets* at the *evil* *Things* which are *allotted* to him: He never *murmurs* at *God*, or *quarrels* with *Men*, or *disquiets* himself however the *World* moves about him; for all things come to pass as he *would* have them, because he

would have them come to pass as God appoints them.

How very sweet and pleasant must such a state of Life needs be, wherein is fulfill'd that saying of the Prophet, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace whose Mind is stay'd on thee, because he trusteth in thee?*

Isa. 26. 3.

5. Great Benefit and Advantage will accrue to us by a sincere and constant discharge of this Duty.

By resigning up our selves to God's conduct, we effectually ingage the care and favour of his Providence over us; for it will not consist with his Honour or his Promise to suffer any who repose their trust in him to be ashamed.

And

And how great an *advantage* must it needs be, to have the *Wisdom* of God to contrive for us, his *Goodness* to supply us, and his *Power* to protect us? Is it not a much greater *priviledg* than if we were receiv'd under the *Patronage* of the greatest, wisest or best Man in the World? for what can we want, if fed from the *Hand* of divine Bouny? what *Evil* can hurt us, if shelter'd under the Almighty wings?

By submitting to God's Conduct we shall escape many *Sins* and *Dangers*, which they usually fall into who would be at their own disposal; Yea hereby our evil Things will be turn'd into Good, for we shall receive a *Blessing* with them, which

will *sanctify* and *sweeten* them to us.

And if we continue always to *implore* and *rely on* God's *Conduct*; he will never leave or *forsake* us, till he hath brought us past all our *Fears* and *Dangers*, up to that *Heaven* where we shall receive good *Things only*, and shall be able to *thank*, and *praise* God for those evil *Things* wherewith he disciplin'd us for our *Profit*, that we might be partakers of his *Holiness* here, and of his *Glory* hereafter.

Heb. 12.  
10.

This Argument may be farther improv'd by considering more particularly some of the chief *Advantages*, which will accrue to us by *submitting* our  
selves

selves to the *conduct* and *disposal* of God's *Providence*.

1. In following this *Divine Conduct*, we shall always walk in ways that are *right* and *lawful*, and thereby escape those *sinful Courses*, which *defile* our *Souls*; *wound* our *Consciences*, and *inthrall* us in manifold *Miseries*; when we walk in the *Light* of our *own Eyes*, and after the *Lusts* of our *own Hearts*, we run our selves into many dangerous *Errors*. So the Apostle observes οἱ ἐσλόμῃνοι πλεῖστον. *They that will be rich* [and follow their own will therein] *fall into Temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition. For the Love of Money* is

is the root of all Evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But if we follow this Heavenly Guide, he will never mislead us into any crooked ways, nor betray us into any Temptations, which may prove too strong for us. This David mentions as a considerable Advantage of having God for his Shepherd over him. *He restoreth my Soul, he leadeth me in the paths of Righteousness for his Namesake.* And elsewhere the Psalmist observes it to be the Privilege of him that relies on God's Conduct, that, *The Law of God is in his Heart, none of his steps shall slide.* We find also the Royal Preacher largely

Psal. 23. 3.

Psal. 73.  
31.

largely insisting on this Argument ! The Lord giveth Wisdom ; Prov. 2. 6  
and out of his Mouth cometh Knowledge &c. and Understanding. He layeth up sound Wisdom for the Righteous ; he is a Buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of Judgment, and preserveth the way of his Saints. Then shalt thou understand Righteousness and Judgment, and Equity ; yea, every good path, Discretion shall preserve thee, Understanding shall keep thee : To deliver thee from the way of the evil Man, from the Man that speaketh froward Things, who leave the paths of Uprightness, to walk in the ways of Darkness. And in the next Chapter he expressly asserts this to be the Priviledge of those who acknowledg God for their Guide,

Guide, and follow his Conduct.  
 Prov. 3. 5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine  
 Heart, and lean not unto thine own  
 Understanding. In all thy ways  
 acknowledg him, and he shall di-  
 rect thy paths. He cannot but be  
 in the right way who hath God  
 to direct him; and no wise or  
 good Man, but will highly value  
 so great a Priviledg.

2. If we follow the Conduct of  
 God's Providence, our way will be  
 smoth and plain, not incumber'd  
 with such perplexities, or obstructed  
 with such impediments as they meet  
 with who are led by the ignis fa-  
 tus of their own uncertain Under-  
 standings.

We sometimes complain of *Diffi-*  
*culties* in our *Affairs* which our  
 skill cannot extricate, we cark in  
 our thoughts, are *dubious* and  
*fluctuating* in our Resolutions, and  
 after many fruitless Attempts and  
 toilsome

toilsome *Indeavours*, are forc'd to let go the *fond Project*, and sit down in a hopeless despair: But if we were under the *Conduct* of Divine *Wisdom*; if we would stay till God open a way to us by the course of his *Providence*, and follow his *conduct* in using those *means* and *opportunities* he provides; we should find favourable *Circumstances* about us conspiring to *facilitate* our designs, the course of God's *Providence* would suggest to us *prudent Thoughts*, and the *Events* that happen to us would *concur* with our *Indeavours*; whereby our *Affairs* would proceed *easily* and *steadily*; and tho' God may sometimes permit some *rubs* or *delays* for our spiritual *exercise* and *improvement*, yet he will not suffer us to be *puzzled* with any *inextricable Difficulties*, or to be *defeated* in any *extraordinary Disappointments*;

Thus some interpret that *Aphorisme* of the *Wise-Man*, *Commit thy ways*

Prov. 16. 3. *ways unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established*; that by committing our Affairs to the Conduct of God's Providence; our thoughts shall be established in prudent and steady Resolutions; and be supported in an honest design against all Obstacles and Difficulties.

3. If we are under God's Conduct we shall be under his *Safeguard* too, and our way will be always *safe* and *secure*. He that hath no better *Guide* then *himself*, is like the *Blind leading the Blind*, which, according to the Jewish Proverb, *falls into a ditch*; and indeed most of the *Mischiefs* and *Troubles* we meet with proceed from our own *ill conduct* of our selves. But if God be our *Guide*, his *Hand* that leads us, will also support us, his *Presence* that conducts us will also protect us; He will give his *Angels* charge over us to keep us in all our ways, into which his Providence leads us. *The steps of a good Man are order'd by the Lord,*  
and

and none of his steps shall slide ; Tho he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his Hand.

Thus we read that *Israel* travel'd with safety in an uncouth *Wilderness* amidst all their *Enemies*, while they obsequiously follow'd the sign of God's *Presence* conducting them ; but when they would go on their own Heads against *Amalek*, they were easily *vanquished*. We likewise find that *Abraham* who resign'd up himself to God's Conduct, met with no considerable *Troubles* in the whole course of his Life ; But *Jacob* who follow'd rather the Conduct of his subtle *Mother*, then the Guidance of God, in procuring his *Blessing*, procur'd thereby many *Crosses* and *Troubles*, which followed him all his days.

4. If God be our *Guide*, we shall not fail of *Success* ; for he that can do *whatever pleaseth him in Heaven and Earth*, will prosper the work of our Hands ; He will certainly lead

PSAL 37. 4.  
5.

us to that Good which is most convenient for us, if not to that particular Good which we, by mistake, design'd. *Delight thy self in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine Heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* As God conducted the Children of Israel safe through the Wilderness, and at last brought them to the Land of Promise: So will he conduct those who Trust in him, amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal Life, and at last put them in possession of that Heavenly Canaan, toward which every good Man is tending in all the passages of his Life. He will guide them by his Counsel while they are on the way, and at last receive them to himself in Glory.

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ERRATA. P. 67. L. 20. f. from what I have  
delete the. P. 73. L. 7. r. *Christ*. P. 78. L. 2. for *Cous*  
r. *from*. P. 90. L. 11. *fall*. f. *up*. P. 93. L. 14. f.  
*fall*. *left*.

